



How State Legislative Activity Impacts Local Education And What You Can Do About It



For a long time now, the State of Virginia has been lowering its taxes and providing fewer services when compared to other states. Consider this:

- Virginia is ranked 12th in the nation in personal income.
- Virginia is ranked 41st in state taxes as a percentage of personal income.
- Virginia is ranked 44th in spending on K-12 education as a percentage of personal income.

This means the State is unfairly shifting its responsibility to localities in order to keep its taxes low when compared to the rest of the nation. As a result, when it comes to providing many State services, localities must pick up the tab. Or, in many cases, the services are not provided.

This is probably most evident in funding for local education.

The Governor's Proposal

Governor Warner, with his latest budget proposal, should be commended for acknowledging that the State needs more revenue to fund its obligations. In his January 14 remarks to the General Assembly, the Governor stated, "I will not accept a budget that fails to meet Virginia's commitment to education." He has also indicated that he welcomes debate on how to address this critical issue.

In that context, it should be noted that his proposed budget for the 2004-2006 biennium has room for the General Assembly to improve it in terms of generating sufficient revenue to meet core State responsibilities— including State funding for K- 12 education.

School funding is the joint responsibility of the Commonwealth and local governments. On average, the State is supposed to pay 55 percent of the cost for providing minimum school standards. Local governments pick up the rest of the bill.

If the State honored its commitment, it should increase education funding by \$1.2 billion over the next two years just to meet the minimum state standards.

So what is the bottom line? The Governor's budget increases State funding for K-12 education by over \$700 million, but the budget is still \$500 million short of meeting the State's share of minimum education costs. This \$500 million shortfall must either be made up by local taxpayers or cut from school budgets.

On top of these cuts in education funding, the proposed budget should be enhanced to increase the minimum state standards for

education funding. Presently, these minimum standards are woefully inadequate to meet our children's needs. If localities merely adopted the State's existing standards, one in five teaching positions would be eliminated. In addition, teacher pay statewide would be cut by over \$6,000 per teacher.

Other Ideas

Some legislators recognize that there is an opportunity to take the Governor's proposals and enhance them to provide more funding for education. The Governor has said he welcomes that kind of dialogue.

A bill sponsored by Del. James H. Dillard II, R-Fairfax, calls for an extra \$430 million in the biennium for at-risk students. Meanwhile, a plan proposed by Sen. John H. Chichester, R-Stafford, would use increased State revenues for a variety of purposes, including education. His plan would provide funding for elementary art, music and physical education teachers; more time for teachers to plan their lessons; increased technology training; and more funds for schools in areas with the greatest financial need.

The governor has indicated that he welcomes solutions that can be discussed.

The Need For Change

Virginia's localities have indicated that they will not accept an inadequate level of education for their children. Historically, they have worked hard to make up the difference—and this has put a significant added burden on local citizens while eroding the vitality of our cities.

If you would like more information about the ongoing legislative activity and the role you can play, please visit these web sites:

- *Virginia First Cities Coalition* at **www.vafirstcities.com**. Here, you will find a summary of these and other issues that are critical to Virginia's core cities, as well as questions you can ask your State officials.
- *Alliance for Virginia's Students* at **www.vastudents.org**. Here, you can sign up for an eNews service that will keep you apprised of legislative issues associated with funding for education.

NOTE: The above is an article prepared by Virginia First Cities. Virginia First Cities is a non-partisan organization comprised of fourteen of Virginia's oldest, most fiscally-stressed cities including Charlottesville, Danville, Fredericksburg, Hampton, Hopewell, Lynchburg, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, Roanoke, Staunton, and Winchester.

You Are Cordially Invited . . .

On Monday, February 23, 2004, Mayor Carl B. Hutcherson, Jr. and Vice Mayor Bert F. Dodson, Jr. will deliver the State of the City Address. The event begins at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers. You are invited to attend and hear the Mayor and Vice Mayor speak with the citizens of Lynchburg.

The State of the City Address gives the Mayor an opportunity to bring together the citizens of Lynchburg and talk with them about the events of the past year and the issues that will shape the future. The event will also be aired live on Cable Channel 7.

In addition to the State of the City Address, the Mayor and Vice Mayor will recognize several individuals with the Mayor's Community Service Award of Excellence. Last year's recipients included

Ronald Dolan, Stuart Fauber, Thomas Gerdy, Delia Hooks, Laura Munson, Becky Porter, and Dr. James Taylor. All were cited for their commitment to the betterment of the Lynchburg community and for their countless volunteer hours.

"I enjoy having an opportunity to talk with Lynchburg citizens," said Mayor Hutcherson. "This is a more formal setting than usual, but I think it sets the stage for the coming year. It also gives us an opportunity to recognize those individuals that have made a significant contribution to the well-being of the Lynchburg community."



Carl B. Hutcherson, Jr.
Mayor

Bert F. Dodson, Jr.
Vice Mayor

PUBLIC MEETING

Public Cable Franchise Meeting Scheduled

Adelphia Cable Communications, Inc. (Adelphia) currently has a franchise with the City of Lynchburg (City) to provide cable television services to City residents and businesses. This franchise expires in 2004 and Adelphia has requested to renew the franchise with the City. Following the process prescribed by the Federal Communications Commission, the City is gathering information to assess Adelphia's past performance and to assess the community's needs regarding cable television service. The public is invited to attend a forum to be held on **Thursday, March 4, 2004** to allow for citizens to voice opinions about Adelphia's past performance, and to offer suggestions for community requirements to be considered in the development of the new franchise agreement.

The public forum will be held in the Community Meeting Room at the Lynchburg Public Library on 2315 Memorial Ave., Lynchburg VA. The meeting is scheduled to run from **7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 4, 2004.**

This forum is an opportunity for citizens to let the City know their opinions on cable television as it has been in the past, as it is now, and as it should be in the future. The City encourages any interested citizen to attend this meeting and participate in defining the community's requirements.

PUBLIC NOTICE

City Begins Backflow Prevention Program

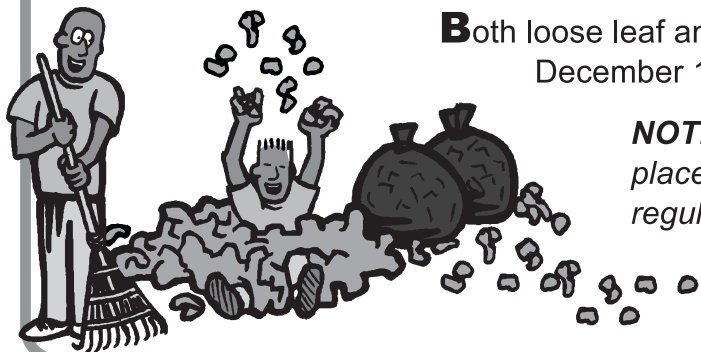
The Commonwealth of Virginia has recently passed legislation that requires the City of Lynchburg to implement a cross-connection and backflow prevention program. On June 10, 2003, Lynchburg City Council approved an ordinance that addresses cross-connection control and backflow prevention. Backflow is the undesirable reversal of flow of contaminated water or other substances through a cross-connection and into the piping of a public water system.

Certain businesses and facilities at high risk for backflow include hospitals and medical facilities, car washes and laundries, and schools and colleges. All businesses and facilities under the new program will be notified by the City of Lynchburg and encouraged to attend one of three informational meetings.

The meetings will be held at the Lynchburg Public Library Community Meeting Room, **Wednesday, March 10, at 10:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m.** City staff will be available to address questions and concerns. For more information, please contact the Utilities Division



Leaf Collection Service is Now Complete



Both loose leaf and bagged leaf collection ended December 19.

NOTE: Bagged leaves may still be placed at curbside for pickup during regular trash collection with a **.95 cent trash tag attached.**



The Lynchburg Community Market Presents

TOUCH OF SOMETHIN' SWEET

BAKING CONTEST!

February 7, 2004

8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Everyone start your ovens! The "Touch of Somethin' Sweet" Baking Contest is back and we want you to enter to win one of many great prizes that will be available for your best sweet recipe. Send in your recipe today! For more details please call 455-4485.

NOTE: The finished product must contain somethin chocolate!



HOLIDAY CLOSING

**All Lynchburg Municipal Offices
will be CLOSED
Monday, February 16
in observance of Presidents' Day.**

Trash will be collected following the normal schedule. The Landfill will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Call Citizens First at **856-CITY (2489)** for more information.

